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NEVER ACTED.

How or when I became a dramatic author, I can't exactly remember; it is certain, however, that I am one, though my plots, my characters, my situations, my incidents, and my sparkling dialogue, are confined to the original manuscripts, unprofaned by the stage-manager's ruthless pencil. In a word, I am a melancholy specimen of the 'outsiders'—of whom it may with truth be said that their name is Legion. Indeed, it would be worth the while of some naturalist, interested in such matters, to classify us according to our assumed intellectual stamina, from the gloomy concocter of poetical tragedies, in five acts, downwards through the gradations of historical drama, domestic drama, melodrama, extravaganza, and burlesque, to the humble farce writers—to which fraternity I have the honour to belong: the revelations, I am sure, would fully repay him for his researches. Of course, the grief of the unsuccessful farce writer is much less sublime than that of the disappointed tragedy writer, but the mortified vanity is the same in both cases. However, I will not inflict any speculations of mine on the reader, but proceed at once to the narration of a few of my own experiences.

From the period when I wore lay-down collars and jackets, with one pocket inside, I have been a theatrical enthusiast. My friends say it is a misfortune that I am what I am. I don't think so, I never shall think so. To this hour (I am eight-and-twenty) I experience precisely the same emotions on entering a theatre as I did at nine and a half—my age when I first set foot therein—whilst I have seen youngsters of nineteen preserve a perfectly unmoved countenance throughout the performances.

I have a recollection of having been impressed with a sense of awe at the aspect of a crowded theatre. The lofty ceiling, with its glittering chandelier high above my head—the tiers on tiers of boxes, ending in the noisy reeking galleries—the multitude of faces—the bright light and soft music—enchanted my wondering senses on my first visit. But the rising of the curtain eclipsed all these; for when the sulky green monster (I almost thought it was alive) slowly and grudgingly rolled himself up out of the way, and displayed the treasures which he had screened, everything else was forgotten. When my enraptured gaze rested on beautiful ladies with roseate cheeks, white necks, and jewelled arms, how my little boy's heart thumped against my ribs! When the bewitching creatures walked about, and conversed with men of noble bearing, I would have given all my worldly possessions—including a new top—to have been one of those men. Two of their number spoke in a loud tone for the benefit of the audience;

what they said I could not distinctly make out, but I repeatedly asked my elder companion why they said it there before us, and whether they meant to do what they said. In my bread-and-butter-eating, six-o'clock-to-bed-going life, I had seen and known very little of the real world, much less of the strange ideal existence then presented to me. In later years, when my collars had assumed a vertical form, when the jacket of one pocket had given place to the coat of many pockets, and myself had reached the regions of hobbledehoyhood, the theatre was my sole amusement—a much-loved resort, where the vexations of my junior clerkship could be forgotten, and where I lived a new life in an atmosphere of poetry and sweet sounds. Among the first to enter, and the last to depart, was I; the most rapt listener there to the music between the acts, with its weird comments on the past and coming scenes, when beneath its spell aerial fancies crowded through my brain, and I gazed—gazed till the fishermen in the Italian drop-scene seemed to live, and move, and have a being.

I have already said that I cannot tell how or when I became a dramatic author—the faculty of being so seeming as much a part of me as are my legs and arms—but my first play was written at the ripe age of fifteen. Perhaps it would be a stretch of courtesy to call that a play which was a clumsy farce in one act; but I didn't think it clumsy—I had perfected it with great care and labour, and had built quite a little castle of anticipations upon it. To be sure, it had a few trifling drawbacks; for instance, I had not the faintest knowledge of dramatic construction, and the phraseology which I had taken for my model was that affected by facetious penny-a-liners. Then, again, from my ignorance of the world, I was unable to assign to my characters their proper action and dialogue. My ladies, in particular, were very outspoken. How could they help it, poor things, for I put language into their mouths such as would only be used by a poor-law guardian in his unofficial moments! In addition to the above defects, I was quite in the dark with regard to the mechanical appliances and practical business of the stage. It may be imagined, therefore, that my first farce was not without its blemishes. Such as it was, however, I submitted it to two judges, one of whom was a veteran dramatic author, known to me only by repute, and to whom I had the assurance to enclose the manuscript for perusal; and the other was an amateur-actor of my acquaintance, who has since achieved greatness by the force of his genius. Both these judges pronounced a favourable decision on my crude attempt—qualified, it is true, but still favourable. The author generously forgave my intrusion, and wrote me a few kind words

of counsel and caution. He had, he said, no time to read my piece—it was a piece of presumption on my part to suppose he had—but from what he could glean by glancing over it, he thought that I was clever, and recommended me to try my wings at a 'minor.' Should he read these lines, he is assured that I still gratefully remember the incident. My actor-friend, too, with rare delicacy, forbore to probe my vanity with a too rough and candid criticism, but considerably pointed out the faults, telling me that, with time and study, I should become a respectable author. Here was a capital of praise to start with. So, after a short interval, I set to work afresh on another piece, to be entirely free from the errors which had disfigured its predecessor.

I had made several additions to my stock of knowledge. I had learned that it is decidedly improper for a young lady about to be married to make allusions to the number and beauty of her future family; also, that no character must enter or exit without a sufficient motive for such entrance or exit; with various other technical details of more or less importance. Profiting, then, by my failure, and stimulated by the approbation which I had received, I threw all my energies into the composition of another piece, with which I determined I should commence my career before the public. Filled as I was with enthusiasm at the prospect of ultimate success, I laboured assiduously at my new work—too much so, I fear, to have been compatible with the proper performance of my duties as junior clerk in a merchant's office. I selected a smart title; I was careful that my dialogue should not exceed the ordinary conversational sentences; and throughout the piece I aimed at the piquant and the witty. To the dialogue I paid marked attention, studding it with elaborate puns, and impromptus which cost me, each of them, half an hour's thought; but I was most especially careful, as I have said, to restrain its exuberance. This latter precaution was so much the more necessary, as I had been in the habit of giving each person speeches of half a page at the least, which tended sadly to retard and a little to mystify the story.

In due time my *petite comédie*, as I loved to call it, was finished; and behold me, one autumn evening, with my precious manuscript carefully wrapped up and sealed, under my arm, betaking myself to a minor theatre which I had chosen for my *début*, in the far north of the metropolis. I had not the courage to address myself to such an awful potentate as the manager; but having ascertained, by correspondence with an official, that he (the official) would procure a reading of my piece for a 'consideration,' in the event of acceptance, my journey was to meet this important personage—this histrionic Mazarin—and deposit my treasure in his hands. He was a smart—nay, glossy man, with a very red face, and a very black moustache, which he cherished and fondled with extraordinary affection. His whole appearance, from his curly new hat to his patent boots, was quite the antipodes of his brethren of the sock and buskin in that remote quarter, who had generally a seedy look about them, indicating but too plainly the late hours and hard work which was their portion in life. My Mentor received me in a very familiar, patronising way; indeed, to have seen us together would have suggested, to an inspired painter, a second edition of the poet and the player. He condescended to tell me, with reference to the profession, that he had been 'born in it, my boy,' and therefore knew, as well as any man on the boards, what would take and what wouldn't (decisively). I humbly accepted the conclusion, and requested to be favoured with his professional opinion on the piece which I had brought with me. It is needless to repeat our conversation, which consisted mainly of magniloquent assertions on his side, and deferential acquiescence on mine—suffice it to say, that before I left him he promised, that

if the piece pleased him, he would forward my interests with the manager to the utmost of his power, subject, of course, to the aforesaid 'consideration.' I must not omit to mention either, that he requested to know whether I was writing for money or for fame; and on my answering 'for both,' appeared satisfied.

To comprehend the full force of my feelings, you must bear in mind the affection which dramatic authors, more than any other *littérateurs*, entertain for their mental offspring. Other writers address you more in the character of spectators of the events which they portray; the dialogue with them is only a minor accessory, subordinate to and illustrative of their verbal descriptions. With us, on the contrary, the dialogue is the first consideration, of which everything else in our art is merely the illustration and counterfoil: into it we throw our energies, our life, till it becomes not only the 'parts' spoken by imaginary individuals, but a record of our own emotions. Can you wonder then, that, as a cruel satirist has said, we are more tickled by our own jokes, and affected by our own pathos, than any one else in the theatre?

Tired and happy, I reached my home on the Surrey side of the Thames, and went to bed that night to dream of future greatness, fancying—credulous being!—that I was on the highway to fame. I little knew how often I was destined to advance on that path in hope, and retrace it in despair. But I am anticipating. To use a common expression, if I went once to that man with anxious inquiries in reference to my piece, I went twenty times. His superb demeanour was not in the slightest degree ruffled by my importunity; on the contrary, he was in full possession of the quality, popularly supposed to belong pre-eminently to Sheridan and a distinguished light comedian of the present day—namely, *putting off*. Each time that I presented myself for intelligence, I was met with some evasive reply: sometimes it was press of business that had prevented his making any progress; sometimes it was one thing, sometimes another; and each time did I with misgivings drag my young limbs wearily homeward: it was always after a hard day's work. Never shall I forget those long, mournful walks in the twilight—twilight within as well as around me—twilight of hope, joy, and fondly-nursed expectations—twilight of the soul. Yet there was nothing in his excuses to which I could make any objection, and I feared to anger my oppressor by useless displays of impatience. So things went on, till after I had been to him about a score of times, and was still returning with an unsatisfactory answer, I would gladly, if not ashamed, have sat down on the first door-step, and relieved my surcharged heart of its burden in a flood of tears.

At length, when I had almost given up hoping, my slow torturer gladdened me with the intelligence that my piece was in a fair way of being put upon the stage: in other words, that, owing to his overpowering influence with the manager, that terrible person had been induced to peruse my manuscript. A farce was required, so said the torturer, just at that time; he had read mine himself, and thought that, with a few alterations, it would be presentable. All this was told me with the most undisturbed self-possession, whilst he was combing his moustache. I well knew that comb; it had twelve teeth, one of them broken off at the end; but the effect upon me was electric. I warmly thanked him for his services, over and above the 'consideration,' and immediately became oblivious of all my unhappiness. What! were my two ladies and my two gentlemen to find living, breathing representatives? Were two real pretty actresses to speak the words I had set down for them? How I should hang upon their lips, and follow them with my eyes, and repeat their parts to myself, as the piece

proceeded! How delightful, also, to know what was coming before anybody else in the house did! All the people would naturally think that my two gentlemen were going to fight a duel when they crossed and recrossed so fiercely, when the one gesticulated, and the other looked over his shoulder, till at last they exchanged cards. But I should know better; I should know that it would all turn out to be a mistake, which would be set right at the *dénouement*, when one of the pretty ladies would explain everything, and appeal to the audience in a charming little epilogue. Then, of course, I should appear before the curtain in obedience to enthusiastic calls, and make a low bow to the delighted auditory. I scarcely dared to believe in such felicity.

My exultation was short-lived—fleeing as the mirage which deceives the wandering traveller—for the very next time that I went to my Theatre, I was almost stunned by the news that my piece was rejected. A farce had been accepted, and was in rehearsal; but it was not mine; some more favoured writer had superseded me. To say that I felt disheartened, crushed, would scarcely give you an idea of the violent reaction which took place within me as I saw the one hope disappear which had gleamed through the darkness. Even my red-faced friend must have been touched by my look of dejection, for he attempted to console me with the remark, that if I had been only a *létle* earlier in the field, I might have been successful. So self-confident was I, that I could never bring myself to believe that my failure resulted from any inferiority in my work. No, thought I bitterly, it is not that; some friend or relative, perhaps, with a stronger claim than mere merit, has obtained possession of the magnate's ear, to the exclusion of me—the friendless stranger. I was now indignant; my former diffidence was cast to the winds; and I went straight to the great man, and demanded my manuscript. After a search and a grumble, he found and delivered it to me, growling out that people must suppose that he paid an amanuensis to read everything that was sent to him. I heeded not the remark, but pressing my hat over my eyes, to hide my boy's tears, I left the theatre. I did not stop to take leave of the red-faced man, but with my little comedy in my pocket, pressed close to my heart, I found myself once more returning by that road on which I had made so many weary, useless pilgrimages.

Years have passed away since the foregoing episode, years of application to other pursuits, but through all changes I have never ceased to cherish the idea of one day becoming a successful dramatic writer. Over and over again have I sat down, in my intervals of leisure, to spin some fresh dramatic web more complex or more 'taking' than before; but no manager has hitherto been caught therein. Yet I have not gone carelessly to work, for every link, every mesh of my web, has been zealously perfected before I have suffered it to leave my hands. I have taken household suffrage (after Molière), I have expunged and rewritten and re-expunged, till I fondly imagined I had made as near an approach to perfection as it was possible. Still has come, after much pressing, the same coldly polite answer; declining my assistance, and adding another dead hope to my already lifeless nosegay. To be sure, I have the satisfaction of being condemned unheard (or unread); but that is, at the best, only a sorry consolation.

Once, and once only, since my first oasis, have I been refreshed by a gleam of sunshine, in the shape of a small, but now rather dirty, little note, which I always carry about with me. This little note is a communication from a brother-author, who had become the lessee of a theatre; its contents are warmly eulogistic of a certain piece which I had sent to the writer; and, what is most to the purpose, he intimates—happy consummation!—that when his arrangements permit, it shall have a place on his

programme. But it was decreed otherwise; for, after a gallant struggle against adverse circumstances, the poor man was compelled to resign the reins of management, and my farce, upon which I had rebuilt my old fame-castle, now lies in my desk, unacted, causing in me mournful feelings when my eye rests on it, like one looking at a stranded ship thrown high and dry on the shore. My correspondent, whilst he was in power though, set a good example to his contemporary despots, inasmuch as he made some sort of an attempt to read his 'deluge' of manuscripts, and my dirty little note is the result. This thumbed epistle is a source of satisfaction to me, indeed a precious recognition, when I reflect that the hand which penned the encomium belongs to no partial friend, but to an experienced critic, himself an author of talent and reputation. Whenever I grow desponding—which is not seldom—at my want of success, I take from my pocket my dirty little note, and the sight of its well-known characters helps to restore my equanimity; indeed I am not quite sure but that at some of my haunts it is identified with me, and I am known as the young man with the dirty little note.

Yet I ought not to complain, for there are hundreds of amateur-dramatists who have no dirty little notes to shew; hundreds of men and women who have invested their precious time in this fruitless speculation. There must be an absorbing interest in the drama to attract such a crowd of aspirants; personal vanity may be the impulsive motive with many of the amateur-actors, but the dramatists must have a much stronger incentive, for they far outnumber them.

It has been the fashion lately, in periodical literature, to people the old streets of London with the shadowy celebrities of former days. Thus poor Dr Johnson has been trotted about to an extent, that if it had been in the substance instead of the shadow, would have caused the great lexicographer to use rather undignified language. The posts which he touched, the particular paving-stones that he trod upon, the taverns where he contradicted, asserted, and laid down the law, are all matters of history; in fact, the public are as well acquainted with his haunts and walks as they are with the windings of their own domiciles. I am no exception to this fashion. I am sensible of a quiet pleasure whilst sauntering, in my own dreamy way, along some ramshackle old street in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden or St Martin's Lane, where many of the upper stories overhang the cellar-like ground-floors, and every window, roof, and gable is suggestive of the life of olden times. If I behold, high up in air, some garret window more dusty and broken than the others, I picture to myself that there some poor poet wrote, and starved, and died in the wild race for fame; then I see a house of more pretension, the residence of some noble 'patron'; yonder in that dwelling was written, under the pressure of debt, the immortal *Vicar of Wakefield*; further on, a sublime epic was composed, or a world-known comedy first put on paper. Perhaps, of all the people in this street—the Irishman selling oranges and fine 'ating' apples, the occupants of the green-grocery, oyster, and coffee shops, the readers at the old book-stalls—I am the only one looking back through the long vista of time. These walks always carry me to the purlieus of the national theatres—I won't call them opera-houses to please anybody—and the sight of the green type on the white bills brings me back to 1860 with a vengeance. I daresay you will not be surprised if I become acrid and egotistical as I view those great green letters by the light of the flaring gas from So and So's tavern. Here am I, a poor dramatic author, wandering about among the moral ruins of the British Drama; meeting with few indications of its past existence, save the two gigantic theatres which were once its head-quarters, and the old, old streets which have looked down on crowds of

playgoers hastening to see a Garrick, a Siddons, a Kemble, or a Young. Shadows of dead authors join me as I stand reading the bills. What queer-looking men they are with their wigs, ruffles, and swords; they come trooping on—even to the last brilliant addition who joined them two years ago—all casting angry glances at the great green letters. Perhaps the dear old Drama will one day return to its ancient mansions; and perhaps I may be the person who shall reinstate it. Who knows?

AMONG THE REDSKINS.

WHATEVER fault may be found with 'book-making,' or 'writing in *malice prepense*,' as connected with works of the imagination, which some critics (not imaginative writers themselves) contend should flow from the grape of genius without pressing, it will be scarcely urged against a writer of travel that he went out from home for the express purpose of describing foreign parts, and settled himself in a strange land for the sole purpose of subsequently portraying it in an octavo volume. The bookmaker who knows his trade is, in fact, much more likely to say well what he has to say than the amateur who does not know it—the gentleman who surveys mankind from China to Peru from the deck of his private yacht. Upon these grounds, we took up *Kitchi-Gami*,* the work of that well-known traveller, Mr Kohl, with confidence; nor, now, that we have read it, do we think that trust misplaced.

Mr Kohl, it seems, was commissioned by the government of the United States to prepare some great national work upon the history and geography of America; and while the negotiations concerning it were pending, installed himself upon La Pointe, an island in Lake Superior (*Kitchi-Gami*), to do a little Ojibbeway business in the meantime *there*.

He built his own wigwam in one of the Indian villages, or rather having taken unto himself a squaw, as an interpreter, *she* built that edifice for him. 'My Indian woman went out into the woods with an axe, felled the trees, and dragged them out; and her old mother and her young sister and her daughters, helped her in the job.' Some men would have gallantly assisted these hard-labouring damsels, but Mr Kohl did nothing of the kind, rightly concluding that any interference with recognised female duties would have prejudiced the natives against his naturalisation. The ladies all worked with short tobacco-pipes in their mouths, and wooden cradles, with children in them, upon their backs. These *tikinagans* are quite little houses within houses, and are more carefully decorated and prepared than the dwellings of any of the grown-up people. And to begin at the beginning, it may be as well to describe, Reader, how you, *you*, if you had been an Ojibbeway—and why should you not have been so?

For is it not mere accident of birth

That we are not high-priests to Mumbo Jumbo?

—would have been lodged and boarded in early infancy.

'The principal factor in this infant's house is a flat board. For this purpose, poplar wood is selected; in the first place, because it is light; and secondly, because it does not crack and splinter. On this board, a small frame of thin peeled wood is fastened, much after the shape of the child's body, and stands up from the board, like the sides of a violin from the sounding-board. It is fastened on with bast, because the Indians never use nails, screws, or glue. 'The cavity is filled and stuffed with very soft substances for the reception of the child. They prepare for this purpose a mixture composed of very fine dry moss, rotted cedar-wood, and a species of tender wool found in the seed-vessels of a species of reed. . . .

'In this bed the little beings nestle up to the arm-pits; so far they are wrapped up tightly with bandages and coverings, but the head and arms are free. At a convenient distance above the head is a stiff circle of wood, also fastened to the cradle with bast. It serves as a protection to the head, and if the cradle happen to fall over, it rests on this arch. In fact, you may roll an Indian *tikinagan* over as much as you please, but the child cannot be injured.'

Upon the arch over the head are hung within reach of the infant's hands its playthings and presents, which are of a nature that European children would not know very well what to do with—carefully worked moccasins, and miniature bows and arrows, omens of the baby's future pre-eminence in the chase or the battle. The coverlids thrown over the whole cradle, too, display great magnificence. One woman used a wide sky-blue cloth for this purpose, glistening with a couple of pounds of pearl-beads, and for which she said she had paid ten dollars, or half her yearly income.

'Immediately after birth, the little being is stretched out on the board, and its tender limbs laid straight; they drag and pull at it, make its back and legs as straight as possible, and place the feet exactly perpendicular, parallel, and close together, before packing it up. Thus, even in the cradle, care is taken that the Indian's feet should not turn outwards. A Canadian *voyageur* assured me that the Indians, at every step, covered an inch more ground than the Europeans who turn their feet out. In winter, it is impossible to use the snow-shoes, if the European fashion of walking is followed. But, besides the feet, the Indian mothers play tricks with other parts of the infant's body. Thus, for instance, they pay great attention to the nose, and try to pull it out so long as the cartilage remains soft, for a large nose is an ornament among the Indians.'

No European infant is more petted than these small Ojibbeways, not only by their mothers, but by their otherwise phlegmatic fathers; and the death of one of these little ones is the cause of indescribable grief. Singularly enough, it is comforting to the wife on such occasions if her husband dies also. When people die, it seems, they all go along the path of souls. If they resist the attractions of a certain magnificent strawberry, they will probably go on prosperously till they come near Paradise. 'It is altogether a journey of from three to four days. Then a large broad river bars the way. Over it, there is no regular bridge. Something that looks like a great tree-stump lies across it. Its roots are firmly fastened on the opposite shore. On this side it raises its head, but it does not reach quite to the land. There is a small gap, over which the souls must hop. The log, too, is constantly shaking. Most of the souls spring across, balance themselves properly, and save themselves. Those, however, that jump short, or slip off the bridge, fall into the water, and are converted into toads or fishes. Hence it is not good when the deceased are bound to a board, for otherwise they might move freely, and, perchance, save themselves by swimming. If fastened to a board, they can be easily carried down with the stream. Little children, too, fare very badly here, because they are not good jumpers, and so they perish in great numbers at the bridge. Hence our mothers can never be consoled when their children die before the time when they could help themselves along the road to Paradise.' They are glad when the father dies also, that he may help them across.

If the reader, in the supposed case of his being an infant Redskin, were taken ill at La Pointe, a doctor would be sent for of a very different character from any family practitioner in Great Britain. He would go down upon all-fours, and so crawl up to him and then back again many times, gazing fixedly upon the little patient all the while, as though he were

* Chapman and Hall. 1860.

his prey. Mr Kohl, whose duty it clearly was to see everything, and who accordingly saw it, lifted up the curtain of a wigwam—peeped, as we should say, through the key-hole of a private dwelling-house—and witnessed one of these medical experiments. The poor little being lay in its father's arms, who looked remarkably sorrowful and grieved. The doctor was crawling backwards and forwards, in the manner we have mentioned. 'His chief instrument was a hollow, very white, and carefully polished bone. This bone, which was about two and a half inches long, and of the thickness of a little-finger, the doctor repeatedly swallowed, then brought it up again, blew on the child through it, sucked up the skin through the tube, and then ejected the illness he had drawn out into a basin with many strange and terrible convulsions. All this was accompanied by incessant drumming, rattling, and singing by an assistant of the doctor, and many sighs from the mother of the child. But for all that, the poor little thing was hurrying rapidly to the grave.' Even in the case of death, however, there is a strange method of keeping the poor child in remembrance. It is the custom among the Ojibbeways and other Indian tribes to cut off a lock of hair in memory of their deceased infants, and to wrap it up in paper and gay ribbons. Round it they lay the playthings, clothes, and amulets of the little departed. These form a tolerably long and thick parcel, which is fastened up crosswise with string, and can be carried like a doll. 'They give this doll a name, signifying "misery" or "misfortune," and which may be best translated "the doll of sorrow." This lifeless object takes the place of the deceased child.'

When the year of grief is ended, a family feast is prepared, the clothes and other articles given away, and the lock of hair buried; but, in the meantime, however wearisome a journey she may have to undertake, the mother always drags this doll along with her; and the boys sit by the fire with it in their arms, and play with it, as though it were their living sister. On the breast is usually fastened the spoon with which the dead child used to be fed. The Ojibbeway system of wearing deep mourning is remarkable for its extreme simplicity. They rub a handful of charcoal over the entire face. When the deceased is not a near relative, however, or if some time has elapsed since the melancholy occurrence, they, like ourselves, have a way of displaying a 'mitigated grief': they wash half their faces, and leave the other half in shade. Their ordinary garments are very various, since their coats are of paint only, and can be renewed without the aid of a tailor. Red is their favourite hue, and next to that, as a 'ground colour' for the face, they affect yellow and Prussian blue. Adorned thus gaudily in feathers, shells, and gewgaws, these Ojibbeway dandies are yet severe enough upon the costumes of any other tribe, such as the Sioux, accusing them of dressing out of taste, and without due regard to quiet propriety; nor do we wonder at this strange effect of custom, when we find Mr Kohl himself confessing that, after he had been with them some time, he always thought the Indians insignificant, and even uglier, when they washed themselves, and lost their ground colours.

The boyhood of the Redskin is destitute of much interest and unpleasant to read of, because often defiled with the vilest acts of cruelty towards unoffending animals; but when about fourteen or fifteen years of age, a curious ordeal awaits him. His Great Fast, which is always a voluntary one, takes place. He retires into the recesses of some remote forest, defies all the claims of nature, and fixes his ideas upon celestial matters until he falls into convulsions, and attains, as he believes, a power of perception above that of ordinary life. These lads are warned beforehand, if a nightmare or bad dream oppresses them, to give up the affair at once, come

down from the trees in which they roost upon these occasions, and put off their Dream of Life to another time. The Indians do not much like talking of this Dream of theirs; but our indefatigable bookmaker managed to obtain experiences from several of them by means of gifts of tobacco and coloured dimity. We cannot think that, in any given case, he got the best of the bargain. Always misty, always garrulous—when once their tongues are set going—always prefacing the scanty information they possess with a lunatic account of the formation of the human race, and of the Great Beaver who created the elements by his four hops through the world, their dreams are even more unintelligible than their waking thoughts. The fact seems to be, that this fast lasts so long—often for many consecutive days—that their brain gives way from exhaustion. Nevertheless, of that faculty which we ourselves call *clairvoyance*, Mr Kohl gives some singular examples as having occurred among them.

According to the Indian accounts, the arrival of the whites was distinctly prophesied to the natives of Lake Superior by a distinguished *jossakid*, or sooth-sayer, the information having been imparted to him in a dream. The seer busied himself for days as to what this thing might signify, fasting, taking vapour-baths, and shutting himself up for lonely meditation upon the matter. At last, when he had got the thing as clear as it seemed likely to become, he summoned the other *jossakids*, midés (priests), and ogimas (warriors), and revealed his mysterious tidings.

'He told them that men of a perfectly strange race had come across the great water to their island (America). Their complexions were as white as snow, and their faces were surrounded by a long bushy beard. He also described to them exactly the wondrously large canoes in which they had sailed across the big sea, and the sails and masts of the ships—even their iron corselets, long knives, guns, and cannon, whose fire and tremendous explosion had filled him with terror even in his dreams and convulsions. 'His *clairvoyance* entered into the smallest details, and he described exactly how the "boucan" (smoke) ascended from their long tubes into the air, just as it did from the Indian pipes. 'This story of the old *jossakid*, who spent a good half-day in telling it, was listened to by the others in dumb amazement, and they agreed on immediately preparing an expedition of several canoes, and sending a deputation along the lakes and the great river to the eastward, which could examine these matters on the spot, and make a report on them to the tribe. 'This resolution was immediately carried out. The deputies voyaged for weeks and months through the lands of many friendly tribes, who knew nothing as yet of the arrival of the white men, probably because they had not such *clairvoyant* prophets and dreamers among them as the gifted men on the Anse.'

It is similarly told us in Cortes's History, how Motezuma continually asserted that the advent of the Spaniards had been predicted and described by his prophets and priests. The reverse side to which accounts, of course, is, that the influential chieftains may have had early intelligence of the matter, and narrated it in Indian fashion as a revelation of their own.

The Dreams of Life are sometimes represented to us in this volume pictorially, and resemble something between the first efforts of a very stupid child to draw from nature, and the quaint confusion of the Willow Pattern Plate. The poetic legends of the Indians are also, for the most part, not only crude and childish, but monstrous and inharmonious; but of these it is fair to say that we have only the dregs in *Kitchi-Gami*, since Mr Wraxall, the translator, has left out all those in the volume which formed the raw material for *Hiowatha*, and were therefore already familiar to the British public. The oratorical efforts of the Indians, as well as being diffuse and wordy in

the extreme, are disfigured by absurd inconsistencies and pieces of bathos. Upon a certain important public occasion, one of the chiefs makes a powerful harangue in the presence of his own people and before the American agent, but concludes in this fashion: 'I could say much more on this point, but I will now sit down, for I am not accustomed to wear these new European trousers which have been given me, or to stand long in them. They annoy me. Hence I will cease to speak, and seat myself.' The natives are almost always egotistical, and much given to narrate their own achievements in war or hunting; but they are veracious. One gentleman—with one eye painted white and the other black—was not ashamed to describe, as it were from the Tribune, how he once fell upon a poor solitary Sioux girl, and scalped her. At the moment, Mr Kohl forgot his profession, and was inclined to shun this individual; but on afterwards making his acquaintance (to get at the particulars of the affair, we suppose), found him to be an amiable and modest young person enough. The fresh scalp—not that particular one, but another which our author had the good-fortune to fall in with—is not so hideous an object as one would imagine. 'It was carefully extended on a wooden ring, and so copiously adorned with feathers, gay ribbons, tinkling bells, fox and other tails, that the bloody skin and hair were almost entirely covered.' One of the half-breeds of Pembina being shot through both arms, and rendered utterly defenceless, suffered the Sioux to scalp him without his betraying that he was anything else than dead, and thus preserved his life; but he confessed that it hurt him a good deal. When a chief is meditating a war-expedition, he concentrates every thought upon it, in order to dream favourable omens. He will sit for weeks alone in his wigwam, beating a drum, and repeating 'The wolf on the prairie, the wolf on the prairie,' to himself, about a million of times. Sometimes a friend brings another drum, and sitting down by him, 'aids him in his dreams.' This person is generally appointed second leader, for they consider it better that there should be two leaders, in order that, 'if the dreams of one have not strength enough, the other may help him out'—a mode of proceeding in matters military which fairly beats anything that the *Times* had ever to urge against our Crimean administration.

When any poor wretch has been reduced through miserable straits of famine, and perhaps in the depths of some ghastly forest, miles from human help, to commit cannibalism—to eat his squaw (a rare case, but by no means an unknown one), he is thenceforward called a Windigo, and a good deal shunned by society. Curiously enough, as in the case of witches in our own country, persons who have been falsely accused of windigoism, often believe themselves to be really Windigos, and afterwards earn an unquestionable right to the hideous distinction. The libel is exceedingly common too; and any gloomy, unsocial person, such as one meets at home often enough, is, among the Ojibbeways, set down as a Windigo at once. The poor Indians have neither Literature nor Science to withdraw their minds from such sombre and weird imaginings, nor are their Fine Arts of a very high description. There are, however, some female artists, it seems, who do a little wood-carving on birch-bark, and with the points of their teeth. To one of these, Mr Kohl preferred his request for a specimen of her tasteful skill. 'She told us that all her hopes, as regarded her art, were now concentrated on one tooth. At least, she had only one in her upper jaw properly useful for this operation. She began, however, immediately selecting proper pieces of bark, peeling off the thin skin, and doubling up the piece, which she thrust between her teeth. As she took up one piece after the other, and went through the operation very rapidly, one

artistic production after the other fell from her lips. We unfolded the bark, and found on one the figure of a young girl, on another a bouquet of flowers, on a third a tomahawk, with all its accessories, very correctly designed, as well as several other objects. 'The bark is not bitten into holes, but only pressed with the teeth, so that, when the designs are held up, they resemble, to some extent, those pretty porcelain transparencies made as light-screens.'

Kitchi-Gami, interesting as it is, is a sad book. That it foreshadows so clearly the total extinction of the American Indian race, is the least part of its sadness; its worst news is the tale it tells of the worthlessness of that race itself. Generosity (even in the sense of mere giving) and Gratitude are great virtues, but they do not redeem an otherwise contemptible nation. Let the British reader be content with his lot, nor pine—when his tailor's bill or some other evil of civilisation comes upon him—that he was not born one of Mr Fenimore Cooper's 'noble savages;' for though he should escape the scalping-knife in his youth, or the tongue of slander in middle life (at which period one is most liable to become a Windigo), there is scarcely such a thing as reverence for age among Redskins, and his very children, when he grows old, will leave him, if they get the chance, to perish in the desert.

THE BATEMAN HOUSEHOLD, AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM.

CHAPTER IV.—SHIFTS.

LET no supersensitive Reader shudder at the title of this chapter, for the matter of it, although disrespectful, is very far from being indelicate. It treats merely of those contrivances which those who have little money employ to get more, and those who have no money adopt in order to live. Robert Marsden is at present in the former category; out of his thousand pounds of fortune, or rather out of the eight hundred pounds which represented it in consequence of his anticipating his majority, he has some thirty-five pounds in gold remaining; which he wears, less uncomfortably than when it was a greater sum, sewed into the waistband of his breeches, over which a loaded revolver is on constant sentry-duty. The rest has gone in various purchases which he was assured in London were indispensable to Australian existence—among which is an excellent galvanising apparatus—and which in Australia, he is convinced, would have been far better left in London. He also lost a little on the voyage out, at a very remarkable game at cards, of colonial origin, called *Yosh*. After landing at Melbourne, he had lived indifferently enough at a small lodging-house at about three times the rate which his Covent Garden hotel had cost him before starting from home. Since he arrived at the Diggings, where we now find him, a digger of two months old, he has been copiously bleeding gold from his waistbelt to supply himself with the most ordinary necessities of life; working hard as a railway navvy; sleeping under canvas—for with misplaced acquisitiveness he had sold his iron-house, his one good home investment, for five times its cost; and dreaming the most disappointing dreams of regretted England. Often and often as he spat upon his hands preparatory to taking up the wheelbarrow handles (which was one of the few leisure moments vouchsafed to him for reflection), he cursed the day that brought him over seas to that antipodes where everything was upside-down indeed; where convicts were magistrates; gold-diggers, men about town; servants, masters; and young gentlemen with the Marsden blood in their veins, little better than mudlarks—nay, worse indeed, since mudlarks were understood to enjoy their occupation, which was very far indeed from being the case with him.

Two months and a half had he and some nineteen

of his fellow-countrymen been working in a perhaps Pactolean but certainly tawny stream, and not one bit of gold had they yet discovered. They occupied a plateau at the foot of a vast rock, over which the river was precipitated some hundred and twenty feet; and beneath, and between them and the plain, was another cataract. Gold had been found in the bed of the stream above where the granite was what is called 'soft' or rotten, but not below, where it was hard; so that it was an even chance that it should be found midway on the plateau, although other gangs of diggers, who had so reasoned, had been deterred by the labour of the undertaking from trying their luck. The party of Robert Marsden, however, besides being numerically strong, were sanguine—being composed chiefly of new-comers—and they had at last completed, after enormous labour, a new channel whereby the waters should be drained off immediately below the foot of the first cataract, and the golden treasure be left bare, or at least attainable. It was determined to tap the river on the ensuing morning, and in the meantime eight of their number kept guard, by fours, over the precious channel; it being judged possible that they might be anticipated even during the night by some who had not been working ten hours a day for ten weeks, but who, cuckoo-like, preferred to take advantage of the labour of others. Never had river in the most mythological times a stranger set of guardians. The old category of 'soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, gentleman, apothecary, plough-boy, thief,' pretty exactly described their different professions, our hero of course being the gentleman. The thief—a *valet-de-chambre*, who was an extremely clever fellow, and had picked up some magnificent phrases from his last master, through whose good offices he had also been transported—and Marsden, were most heartily tired of the job, and took a far less cheerful view of what was likely to come of it than their two companions.

'I wouldn't take five hundred pounds for my share of the profits,' quoth the apothecary, at the close of a stormy debate upon this subject, and beating the ground with his pistol-but, in his impatience of contradiction, as though it were a pestle and mortar.

'Perhaps you'll give five hundred pounds for mine,' inquired Robert sneeringly; 'you may buy me off for that money this very moment—if you happen to have it about you.'

The notion of the poor ragged half-starved enthusiast having such a sum in his possession, was as ludicrous as attributing wealth to his prototype in *Romeo and Juliet*, and produced a roar of laughter.

The plough-boy, who had recently emigrated from Wiltshire, where his acquaintance with the indications of the presence of auriferous quartz must have been limited, backed the apothecary, however, in his good opinion of their location. He hoped, and expressed the hope, that he should soon be 'up to his neck in golden guineas.'

'That is not precisely the form in which the metal is excavated,' observed Marsden drily; 'and before it attains that shape in this charming country, it is usually stolen from one.'

The apothecary and plough-boy both remarked, with expletives, that they would like to see any man attempting to deprive them of their private property.

The thief said nothing, but determined in his own mind to gratify them in this respect in case of their acquiring anything worth his while to steal. Nevertheless, the four, who were as well assorted as any among their miscellaneous band, agreed to stick together in case of failure; the loadstone of attraction being the few remaining guineas which Marsden alone, of all the adventurers, yet carried round his loins.

Presently—while the snow yet fell, and the night winds blew about the turrets of Rudesleigh Manor, wintery—the Australian summer-morning broke in warmth and music, and out from their dingy tents

came pouring forth the other proprietors of this yet untouched golconda. Unkempt, unshaven men, wonderfully assimilated to one another by this time through their visible admission into the common guild of vagabondism; roving blades, indeed, hatchet-faced, with features just now sharpened on the whetstone of needy expectation, they eyed the sparkling waters greedily, as though their gleam had been the earnest of the riches hid below. The whole nineteen were there, all actuated by one passion, the getting of gold, which had, however, a different attraction for each.

To most of these emigrants, who were of the better class, the primary and most longed for benefit which wealth was to confer, was the means of reconveying them to the old country; to others, whom certain penal enactments prevented from this course, it promised a fair field and no disfavour, which had certainly scarcely been granted to them in England, where crime had been almost their heritage; to many again—and those for the most part professional diggers who, one would have thought, should have known the evil of such a fluctuating existence—it held forth the delights of 'a spree' in Melbourne of a month, or at the most six months' duration, at the end of which were hard work, demi-starvation, and digging again; and these last exhibited by no means less anxiety than the tailor himself, who trusted to return to his far-away wife and her six children, with a little fortune—or than the apothecary, who fervently hoped that what he might gain would long save him from the necessity of going back to his spouse in Sydney, a hard-working letter of lodgings, with whom he was accustomed dutifully to live when he could not help himself.

With Robert Marsden, recklessness had in some measure already supplied the place of philosophy. He had been so hardly used by Fortune of late, that he had mighty little trust in her, and judged it would only be like one of the jade's tricks if she made a fool of him upon this occasion. Still, his heart-thuds quickened not a little when the pick being inserted in the thin earthen barrier which alone separated the new and lower channel from the river below the fall, the waters rushed through it like a mill-race, leaving the main bed at once open to investigation, although still occupied by a considerable stream. A few men being told off to dam this current up with mud and gravel, the rest rushed down into the half-emptied torrent, like drunken soldiers to the sack of a town that has long withstood their efforts. There were many minutes of total silence after the first plunging, save for the splash of spades, and other digging instruments, but it was at last broken by an awful oath from a gigantic digger. His practised pick was not to be deceived by the false juggler Hope—the river-bed was as hard as adamant; and he expressed his opinion of the merits of 'Half-way Fall' as a gold station, in a manner which, had such been within hearing, might have distressed a delicate ear, and which certainly left no mischievous doubt of the real state of the case even in the mind of the most sanguine.

So unsatisfactory had been the investigations of every man into the granite or dark-gray shale which formed the solid portion of the river-bed, and such confidence had each in the corroboration thus afforded by one of so great experience, that the whole band began to wade to shore again, there to remain until at least the search should be rendered less inconvenient by the further diminution of the stream, and anathematising the unpromising spot in every term of reprobation that the combined slang vocabularies of the mother-country and her colonial dependency could furnish. But a little before, and their eyes seemed to have no vision for anything but the golden mirage which had since so cruelly deceived them, but now they glared at one another with passion more dangerous than their former selfishness, as though they

were ready to avenge on man the disappointment inflicted on them by nature. At this moment, in the black silt and filth of the river, so inimical to the hopes of the gold-finder, the poor pickpocket was seen struggling vainly, and sinking as he struggled into a living tomb; but no man offered him assistance. His screams, in spite of the roar of the cataract, could be distinctly heard, but no voice was raised in reply save that of the gigantic digger.

'You be quiet, Master Nimblefingers,' exclaimed he, 'and know when you're well off, will you! You've got no gold, it's true, but after a minute or two you'll not be in the way of wanting it, and therefore you're a lucky fellow.'

It is probable that all the despairing creature caught of this heartless speech was the word 'gold,' and that talismanic word seemed to bestow upon him a super-human energy even in the very jaws of death.

'I have gold!' shrieked he, holding up a tolerably sized nugget in his hands, which the lateral pressure of the mud kept above his head; 'here is gold for all of you, and to spare.'

In an instant, as though impelled by some shock of nature, a dozen men, with the digger himself foremost, plunged once more into the flood. Almost heedless of their own danger, they approached the sinking wretch, whose head and arms were now alone visible above the surface, and by means of transverse planks maintained themselves upon the yielding substance, while they extricated their half-dead companion, and brought him to *terra firma*. What an interest was now felt concerning this fellow-creature, whose destruction they had so lately been calmly contemplating! How did he find it? Where did he find it? Not in that black silt, surely?

'No, not there,' replied poor Nimblefingers very faintly, 'certainly not there; it was in some gravel above the shale on the other side, and I was trying to cross over yonder, to tell you of it, and got in, when,' added he, with a peevish pettiness that evoked a general smile, 'you were all so kind and prompt in your assistance.'

This news being fairly obtained, the retailer of it again lost his attraction, his auditors at once crossing by the dam to the spot on the other bank where he had made his golden discovery.

Marsden alone crossed not, but remained with the fortunate thief, who, encased in a tight-fitting garment of a sort of 'Oxford mixture' of pipe-clay and vegetable matter, did not, nevertheless, by any means look the type of good-luck and easy circumstances.

'Master Nimblefingers,' observed the young man grimly, 'do you know that they Lynch in these parts pretty frequently? I recognise that nugget to be one I bought at Melbourne for thrice its value.'

The thief would have thrown himself at the other's knees, but that he motioned him fiercely to remain where he was, and in silence. 'Fool,' cried Marsden, 'would you bring back the whole band of fiends upon you with your antics? You were right enough, man, to tell a lie to save your life, although you would not save it long if that hulking digger yonder should guess how you tricked him. He had his joke upon you when you were smothering, and now it's your turn to laugh at him—that is, when you get clear out of the wood. It was a capital dodge of yours, the notion of finding gold in such a mud-swamp. But the nugget being mine—thank you, yes, I think restitution is the least you can do for me—may I ask where did you steal it from? Pshaw, man, don't prevaricate with me; was it from this breast-pocket, or from out of my knapsack as I slept?'

'That was just it,' responded the discomfited Nimblefingers, whose real name before he took to *aliases* was Miles Ripon; 'it was taken out of your knapsack.'

'Good!' said Marsden bitterly; 'sleep, it now seems, is one of the luxuries which a man has to part with

in this favoured country if he would hold his own. Now, look you, my talented friend, I am a dull fellow, it is true, and must needs sleep, but if ever again I lose one farthing in your company, I shall know at once whose brain to send a bullet through.'

He tapped his revolver, and the other nodded contentedly. 'I am too grateful to you, sir, as it is,' returned he grinning, 'to put you to any such trouble. I know that any other man here would have had me Lynched.'

'I hope you feel as you say,' replied Marsden coldly, 'but I can't say that I believe you. You and I, and those two who kept watch with us, if they be still willing to cast in their lot with us, must be off to-night to Melbourne. It is no use to stay by a gold river that only reproduces one's own nuggets. For my part, I'm sick of digging. I have still over thirty pounds remaining—at least, if I haven't, they must be in your pocket—and they will go further among four than nineteen. We will take that light cart of mine, and be off by moonrise.'

'By all means,' observed Ripon coolly; 'but you know we have not got a horse, sir. That last load of planks for this embankment here well-nigh broke your mare's back. But I will get a horse if you will write the certificate.'

'Certificate!' cried Marsden peevishly; 'I don't know what you mean. I forgot about the poor mare altogether. How far is it to walk to Melbourne?'

'About a hundred miles or so,' returned the other; 'mostly long grass, and the rest of it mud and ruts. It would certainly be much better to write the certificate. People steal horses so perseveringly in this country, that when you buy one you get a deed of transfer from the last owner to account for your possession of it; the colonial character being, one regrets to say, suspicious in the extreme. There is a horse just fifteen miles up-stream here which would just suit us. I've ink and paper in my tent, and can dictate the description, since others and even myself have a difficulty in deciphering my own handwriting. I dare not bring it down without a certificate, or I would not trouble you.'

'I don't at all like it,' observed Robert Marsden, Esq., late of Marsden Hall, scratching his head. 'Of course, we shall send it back again; but still even the borrowing an animal under such circumstances is peculiar. I really don't half like it.'

'You can't possibly tell that unless you have seen it,' observed his new ally, affecting to misunderstand his meaning; 'and as to any scruples about'—

'Yes, that is just it, Master Nimblefingers,' interrupted Marsden, grinning in spite of himself.

'Oh, well sir, if you have the least fancy against temporarily annexing the animal, you know they can have that beautiful bay-mare of yours in the meantime.'

'Very true,' said Marsden gravely; 'that will be exchange and no robbery, will it not?'

'A mere exemplification of barter, sir,' returned the other composedly, 'without which commerce would languish, and the intercourse of nations might just as well be discontinued.' With which enthusiastic sentiment Miles Ripon put Robert Marsden's certificate into his pocket, and started up the river-bank to steal a horse for him.

It was dim moonlight when our two adventurers started in their untaxed cart, with the horse dedicated without permission to the drawing of it, from the top of the eastern river-bank towards Melbourne. Neither the apothecary nor the plough-boy could be prevailed on to accompany them by any argument short of that very strong one which they dared not use concerning the stolen nugget. The retreat had long been sounded to the great army of diggers, and silence reigned over the universal camp as they drove along. Rest, however, was banished from at least one of the indwellers of almost every tent; and wherever

the lights gleamed through the canvas more whitely even than the moonbeams themselves, there watched some wary digger over his sleeping comrades and their hard-earned gains, with weapon ready to his hand. The ground in the ravine, and behind them, was a mere upturned chaos, as if a thousand giants had been pushing Titanic ploughs in all directions, blindfold, as English rustics race with wheel-barrow at village feasts. Before them was the unmade or bush road, sometimes good enough, but in that part resembling a boundless grass-field over-ripe for cutting, with unseen stones at the roots, of which their cart-wheels were the first to receive intelligence, and their shaken bones the second.

It was during a shock more terrible than usual from one of these boulders, that Miles Ripon uttered a cry of very undisguised alarm, and clung to his companion's neck so as nearly to throttle him, exclaiming that there was a rattlesnake in the cart with them.

'There is certainly a box constrictor,' replied Marsden coolly, disengaging himself with his unoccupied hand; 'and there is also a little box of tools.'

'A box of tools!' cried the other in a tone of great relief, 'you would have saved me a miserable minute if you had let me into that secret. But are you a carpenter, sir? and do you know what a box of tools, to a man who can use 'em, in this country is? It is better than a strong box filled with money. It's bread, and meat, and pudding, and a house over your head wherever you go.'

'That's thorough Australian,' responded Marsden savagely; 'all blossom, and promise, and fine words. Now, please to give us a halfpenny worth of brimstone to mix with all that treacle. What are the drawbacks to going into the carpentering line?'

'There are none,' returned Ripon briskly—'there are absolutely none; but with every mile you approach Melbourne, remember, you are decreasing the value of this property. There's Marycross Station, ten miles west of this, a large village, where every window-frame comes from sixty miles away; but perhaps you have friends in town, and a better line chalked out for you?'

'I have no friends anywhere except you, my honest fellow,' replied Marsden bitterly, and with a sneer upon the concluding adjective.

'Look here, sir,' answered Nimblefingers, with some dignity; 'never insult a man as means well by you; it ain't worth the little gratification you derive from it, in comparison with the harm you do yourself—it ain't indeed. Now, I should never have thought of reminding you that you were a gentleman *once*.'

The Marsden blood rushed to the face and forehead of the young man as he heard these words, and he uttered a smothered execration.

'There you see, sir, you're hit now, and you know how it feels,' continued Nimblefingers; 'you've come down and I've run up the ladder—for I don't mean to thief any more, I don't indeed—and now we have met on the same round, so let us agree. You've saved my life, sir, and don't suppose a man forgets that in a hurry because he ain't a swell. What I suggest is, that we make tracks for this Marycross—which is a sheep-station in the neighbourhood of diggings—and there set up together in the building and carpentering line. I'm a good hand at learning, as they always said at the thieves' school in Whitechapel. This horse, which might else bring us into trouble, can be sent back from there as a strayed beast; it's a capital going animal too,' added Miles pathetically, as he regarded the black's fine muscular action; 'but this is one of those peculiar cases, I suppose, wherein that beautiful remark which I remember to have inscribed in my copy-book before I went to the Whitechapel Academy, must be our guide—Honesty is the best Policy.'

'I quite agree about sending back the horse, and

tearing up this certificate, to possess which is like carrying about one's own death-warrant,' replied Marsden; 'but I am no builder, nor, for that matter, carpenter either; I have only knocked a few things together sometimes for my own amusement, when I was a lad.'

'That's the great pull you gentlefolks have over us in your education,' responded the thief. 'I have been a valet all my life, and never taught myself in my leisure hours anything useful. Why, there was a young swell in Melbourne yonder, who came out a ruined spendthrift, and who now makes five thousand a year as a livery-man. He could ride, you see, like a scenter.'

'Like a what?' interrupted Marsden, innocently imagining that his town-bred companion was confusing the office of the fox-hunter with that of the fox-hound.

'Like a scenter, sir—one of those chronological characters, half-men and half-horses—and he was rough-rider to the most vicious animals that came into town, until he became so necessary that one of the principal horse-dealers took him into partnership, and now he is at the top of the tree. Here's the turning, sir, I spoke of, to the West; now, which shall it be? Melbourne or Marycross?'

'Hanged if I know!' cried Marsden irresolutely, and causing the sable steed to slacken his pace. 'I must say I prefer something like civilisation to the utter savageness of the life we have been leading lately.'

'Very well, sir, broadcloth in rags rather than decent homespun—just as you like. One is more likely to meet any old English faces who may be coming over, to be sure; that's one great advantage in Melbourne, isn't it?'

Marsden, who had just slowly passed the turning, brought the horse up to a dead-stop at this remark.

'Suppose we toss, now,' suggested Ripon; 'heads for Melbourne, tails for the settlement; luck always decides what is best for us.'

'Toss then, by all means,' cried Marsden savagely; 'if you have got a coin to toss with, and so let it be.'

The copper arbiter of two men's destinies sprang deftly into the air from the thief's elastic thumb, and after twittering, like lark wings in the ether, came down upon the cart-boards, tremulous, as a ballet-dancer finishes her pirouette.

'It's woman!' exclaimed Marsden.

'Yes, it's Miss Mary Cross,' cried the other laughing; so the big black horse had to be backed a little, and turned into a dim, cart-track, leading up into the western hills. The pair did not utter a word, except when a jerk more violent than ordinary extorted an exclamation, for several miles—Miles Ripon being apparently sufficiently amused with his own thoughts, for a sly smile often crossed his countenance, and Robert Marsden immersed in as engrossing if less agreeable reflections. At last the latter, in a more cheerful tone than he had yet used, broke silence, as the white tents and wooden huts of a pastoral station came into view, pitched upon one of those rich natural clearings peculiar to Australia. 'Well, friend, I am glad we came here, whatever comes of it: a decision once arrived at saves us a world of doubts and perplexities. Besides, we cannot reproach one another now, since the affair has been decided for us. There is certainly nothing like trusting to Providence, and tossing, whenever one has to make choice of one of two courses.'

'Nothing, except making sure beforehand,' responded Nimblefingers with a chuckle, and exhibiting the decisive penny to his astonished companion. 'You see it's got two tails, one upon each side, and therefore had a reasonable chance of not coming up 'heads' in any case. By that means I made Marycross pretty certain.'

Marycross Station might have been taken for a

village green in England—only upon an unusually extensive scale—whereon tents and wooden booths were pitched in anticipation of a fair or races. There was no house, indeed, so comfortable and compact upon it as those upon wheels, which belong to the 'Cheap Jacks' and photographic establishments in the old country; and the 'Hotel' itself—a canvas one—would have looked small indeed compared with any of the peripatetic ones upon Ascot Heath upon the Cup-day. Nevertheless, to our two sleepless travellers it presented an aspect promising enough; and having arranged with caution, and at no slight cost, the retransmission of the strayed black horse to its rightful owners, they enjoyed upon iron bedsteads—the bedding of which expressed the scarcity and dearth of water in the locality—the sleep of those who have made their peace with their fellow-men. After a few hours' repose, they breakfasted; and after having paid about half a sovereign each for the refreshment—fresh eggs, for one item, being a shilling apiece in that pastoral district—set out to seek for a tenement in which to inaugurate, like another Martin Chuzzlewit and Company, their architectural firm. Marsden was for taking a little tent at the moderate rate of three guineas a week; but his companion overruled him, representing with some reason that an architect under canvas would be placed in a similarly anomalous position to a bald man who should devote his energies to the complete restoration of the human hair. So they entered upon the occupation of a log-hut (whose proprietors were migrating further up the country) at twenty sovereigns per month, and that very evening put up the board over their door which proclaimed the advent of two skilled mechanics to Marycross.

Buildings run up with solidity and despatch, and Carpentering in all its branches.

'Heavens!' exclaimed Marsden to his junior partner as they lay on their respective mattresses that night in their own furnished parlour, which was also kitchen and bedroom, 'what should we do if a customer wanted a house to-morrow?'

'Why, run it up, to be sure,' replied his companion; 'run it up, of course, like lamp-lighters.'

Marsden groaned: 'And what, oh most impudent of men, are we to do for timber?'

Miles Ripon struck his fist against the floor, with the first exclamation of annoyance he had yet uttered, and confessed, with ludicrous penitence, that he had clean forgotten all about the timber. 'The first thing to be done, however,' said he, 'is manifestly to cut it down—the trees hereabouts, I reckon, being public property.'

'Cut it down and run it up are, therefore, to be our two watchwords,' rejoined Marsden. 'How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!' muttered he, as he turned round to sleep, 'and I wonder how they will?'

The next morning the two partners were busily engaged in axing the foot of a red-gum tree; not the one which Ripon would have fixed upon, which was about two hundred feet high, with a trunk in proportion, and would have taken them at least a week to fell, but one of less ambitious growth, selected by Marsden, who had often pursued the country gentleman's occupation of 'thinning the timber,' and understood his work; still, with only one axe, and that a little one, and with nobody to assist him—for poor Miles was worse than nobody, and could never hit the tree at the right spot—the affair promised to be rather a tedious one. Long before it was completed, they were interrupted by the very dirtiest Chinaman whom they had yet beheld, although all Chinamen are dirty, and the Australian diggings had already begun to swarm with them. He wore blue baggy breeches, and a blue blouse, shoes like canoes, and a hat that had the appearance of having been formerly a bee-hive, but was now devoted to the harbouring of inferior inhabitants. He had a flat

face and almond eyes, and but that he trotted up to them like a cow, might have been one of those motionless figures who stand for ever upon that bridge in our willow-pattern plates, and fish.

That he wanted something, was obvious from the incessant and apparently angry chattering that he made; but *what* he wanted was a problem that the two adventurers did not know how to solve.

'Hanged if I don't think it's his Tree!' cried Ripon in hysterics of laughter; 'he's touching it as if it was. I never stole a tree before in my life; never. Hi!' roared he, at the top of his voice, and under the popular delusion that speaking in a very loud key was equivalent to using the language of the unfortunate foreigner, 'is this *your* tree—*your* gum-tree?'

'Ge, ge!' responded the Chinaman intelligently, and nodding his bee-hive a very great number of times.

'Then—I—wish—you—may—get—it,' observed Ripon, enunciating every word with distinctness, and in a voice that would be heard at least half a mile away.

'Ge!' assented the Chinaman approvingly, as if he felt that expression of sympathy, and was grateful for it.

'I tell you what,' said Marsden gravely, 'since you seem to understand each other so well, I wish you would persuade him to get to leeward of my nose; he don't smell like a China rose, I do assure you.'

At that moment the distinguished foreigner tapped the bark of the gum-tree solemnly three times, and then lying down upon his back, and shutting his almond eyes, presented the unmistakable appearance of a dead Chinaman.

'Friends at a distance will please to accept this as an intimation,' observed Marsden, quoting from the death-notice in north-country newspapers; 'I don't know what else he can mean.'

'I have got it,' cried Miles Ripon exultingly; 'he wants us to make him a gum-tree coffin and bury him.'

'What! bury him alive?' cried the senior partner in some alarm; 'the thing is perfectly impossible.'

'Not at all,' replied Ripon gravely; '*Carpentering in all its branches*, if you please; that includes Undertaking, and all the rest of it. Don't it, my Celestial friend?'

'Ge!' replied the still prostrate foreigner in a solemn voice.

'And moreover,' pursued Miles, 'this is obviously a religious Chinaman, who is under a vow or something to Mr Budder, or whoever it is, to get himself buried before his time. What right have we to make our European prejudices interfere with this good man's honest convictions?'

At the conclusion of this expression of truly liberal opinion, the supposed fanatic arose from his recumbent position, and pointed toward the neighbouring gold-diggings.

'He wants to be buried *there*,' said Ripon, with the air of a man who has at last mastered some difficult problem in all its bearings.

'He wants us to bury somebody else,' exclaimed Marsden in a tone of relief; 'I wonder how much he is prepared to pay Messrs Marsden, Ripon, and Company for that nice little job?'

'Hi! how much money—dibs—needful—Rhino (*that* sounds like a Chinese word, don't it?) do you mean to give?' asked the junior partner.

Whether Rhino be or be not a term for ready money in the regions of Cathay is yet a matter of doubt, for although the Chinaman's eyes gleamed with an intelligence not before exhibited the moment that the word was uttered, there might have been another cause for it in the little handful of gold which Marsden took out and shook at the same instant.

'Ge, ge!' cried the delighted foreigner—and this time there could be no mistake about the satisfaction

with which that hard-worked monosyllable was uttered—as he produced a small nugget from his pocket, evidently as payment for the job proposed.

'It's worth ten pounds at least,' observed Ripon, examining it closely.

'I gave more than twenty for mine, which is not so large,' said Marsden.

'Very likely,' replied the junior partner drily, and as if he had no great confidence in the head of the firm as a judge of Rhino in its raw material. 'I think we had better accompany the Celestial.'

Accordingly, having secured their tools at home, they followed their new acquaintance a distance of some two miles to the Chinese quarter of the Marycross diggings. There they found many score of his pig-tailed brethren, encamped, as is the custom of their nation, upon ground that other diggers had already worked, but which, disliking labour, they prefer to investigate anew, although, of course, without hope of very considerable profit. The unfortunate deceased, who lay in one of the least savoury of the miserable tents, was attired in his customary blue clothing, and held in his rigid hand, by way of passport to the other world, a paper with a Chinese prayer upon it. Some rice was strewn at his feet, which was supposed to be a propitiatory sacrifice to the devil (who, if such is the case, must be far easier pleased than is represented), and there were a couple of joss-sticks burning; and this was all the ceremony which the poor pious Chinaman, who was the dead man's brother, could afford. He was by no means overcome with grief, however, but rather, having done all that lay in his power, was disposed to take a philosophical view of the matter.

An English digger, who acted as a very indifferent interpreter, informed them that the living Celestial quite counted upon their carrying his departed relative away with them, there and then, and burying him in some spot which was not likely to be disturbed by the unhallowed hands of the gold-seekers; but Messrs Marsden and Ripon hastened to assure him, that it was not the custom of their highly respectable firm to perform funeral obsequies at such an exceedingly short notice. They agreed with the digger, for the sum of two sovereigns, that he should dig a grave of the requisite size in the neighbourhood of the gum-tree, as well as convey the body to it, while they, on their part, promised to complete the coffin by the ensuing morning.

The two adventurers not only felled their tree that forenoon, but split up planks—about the thickness of Vauxhall sandwiches—in more than sufficient number to supply the reasonable needs of the defunct Celestial; the reason of the excess being, that they had ignorantly made the coffin almost a complete square, having fissures in it after the manner of an orange-case; and this gave the digger not a little extra trouble, who had allowed, in his excavations, a very scanty margin indeed, even if the ordinary method of sepulture had been adopted. When it is added that the unconscious Chinaman was dragged by his pig-tail the entire distance from the tent to his place of interment, we may conclude that the arrangements generally were scarcely such as would have done credit to a metropolitan necropolis company.

A BRICK FROM A PYRAMID.

We too often only become conscious of the fact that a great man is amongst us when all that remains of him is clay. Then say we, 'Behold the last of the Titans has departed;' until another public loss reminds us that he was not the last. The grisly King has been very busy of late among our wisest and our best, and arrow after arrow has gone forth against those who have sat longest in our high places of Literature and Science. It is better that the axe should strike those trees, the golden produce of whose summer-time has

already gladdened us, and the white blossom of whose lofty tops has been seen so long and far, than that it should smite the budding promise of the saplings; but the fall of them has been great indeed, and the space which they have left seems as yet a melancholy void.

Neither the least nor the greatest, but certainly one of the most remarkable of those who have recently departed, was Thomas de Quincey, to whom much study was not a weariness of the flesh, and to whose making of many books there is at last an end. As Shelley is said to be the most poetic of poets, so may De Quincey be called the most literary of literary men. Writing was to him both business and pleasure, and the end and the means of life. For his reputation, there is no doubt that he wrote far too much and far too desultorily. Critics, who have balances at their bankers, cannot understand why he did not concentrate his abilities upon some half-dozen mighty works, and thus erect a monument to himself for succeeding ages. Unhappily, literary persons are often subject to more pressing wants than post-mortem cenotaphs, and which must be supplied from day to day: even a philosopher, being also a paterfamilias, must sometimes sacrifice himself to necessity and the periodicals. Again, it is as little to be denied that De Quincey wrote too variously—upon too vast a number of subjects. Mankind distrusts great versatility, and will rarely grant to any one the reputation of being master of more than one trade. But here, too, it must be answered, that some necessities weigh more with a man than even the critical opinion of his fellows, and that the more fields the poor author takes in hand, the greater, if not the more valuable, are his immediate crops. However, and despite these disadvantages, there are few who have garnered a more creditable produce, take it for all in all—blade, and ear, and full corn in the ear—than the thirteen volumes which now lie before us.*

The mere table of their contents is like the catalogue of a library, and comprises almost every subject. There are Autobiographic Sketches, referring to private and public matters, to the Lakes, and to the Lake poets with whom he lived in such close intimacy: Narratives, of the most curious and striking interest, culled from every age and clime: Treatises upon the system of the heavens, and upon the casuistry of Roman Meals; upon Political Economy, and upon the Glory of Motion: then there are the wonderful Confessions (a volume of gorgeous mosaic), standing, pillar-like, alone in literature, and known of all men: Criticisms of poets from Shelley to Homer: Studies of eminent characters from Milton to Judas Iscariot: Essays on the Pagan Oracles and on Protestantism; upon Plato's Republic, upon French and English Literature, upon Sortilege and Astrology; upon the Essenes, the Theban Sphinx, and Rhetoric: Tales from the German: Speculations upon National Temperance Associations, on the King of Hayti, and on the Idea of a Universal History upon a cosmopolitical plan. These are only a few of the subjects upon which that fluent pen has discoursed so wisely and so well in these thirteen volumes. No wonder that De Quincey should have the reputation of being top-heavy and colossal—of being a tremendous engine of periodical oppression. His humour, in particular, is said to be like the play of a Rhinoceros. We never saw a Rhinoceros at play, but we suppose that such an image signifies a gigantic floundering after fun, and the seldom catching it. Let us take, then, a single paper of De Quincey's—a single brick from this enormous pyramid of books—that on 'Murder, considered as one of the Fine Arts;' and put his detractors to shame. He supposes a Society of Connoisseurs in Murder—as there really was in the wicked beginning of this reformed century, a 'Society for the Suppression of Virtue,' a Hell-fire Club, and other abominable

* James Hogg and Sons: London and Edinburgh.

institutions—a company of persons 'curious in homicide, amateurs and dilettanti in the various modes of carnage; and, in short, Murder-Fanciers.' He defends it, in the supposed character of its president, against certain slanderers, who affirm that it is an immoral establishment.

'But no,' says he; 'when a murder is in the paulo-post-futurum tense—not done, not even (according to modern purism) *being* done, but only going to be done—and a rumour of it comes to our ears, by all means let us treat it morally. But suppose it over and done, and that you can say of it, *Τετέλεισται*. It is finished, or (in that adamantine molossus of Medea) *ἀγασται*. Done it is: it is a *fait accompli*; suppose the poor murdered man to be out of his pain, and the rascal that did it off like a shot, nobody knows whither; suppose, lastly, that we have done our best, by putting our legs, to trip up the fellow in his flight, but all to no purpose—*abiit, evasit, excessit, erupit*, &c.—why, then, I say, what's the use of any more virtue? Enough has been given to morality; now comes the turn of Taste and the Fine Arts. A sad thing it was, no doubt—very sad; but we can't mend it. Therefore, let us make the best of a bad matter; and, as it is impossible to hammer anything out of it for moral purposes, let us treat it aesthetically, and see if it will turn to account in that way.'

He backs his arguments by quoting his friend Coleridge, 'who, for all he is too fat to be a person of active virtue, is undoubtedly a worthy Christian,' as acknowledging himself pleased with a certain splendid fire at a pianoforte-maker's, although certainly wishing no ill to the poor man and his pianofortes—'many of them, doubtless, with the additional keys.' The poet would have worked hard enough to extinguish it, had it been necessary, but on the arrival of the fire-engines, he concluded very justly that 'morality had devolved wholly upon the insurance offices.' To him it then became only a splendid fire, and a magnificent spectacle. Similarly, the president adduces an eminent surgeon, Mr Howship, as having, in a work upon Indigestion, described an ulcer, which he had seen, as 'a beautiful ulcer,' although it was well known that 'Mr Howship makes war upon all ulcers.'

The murdering of philosophers is a practice which, it seems, has prevailed from an early period of the seventeenth century; 'inasmuch that if a man calls himself a philosopher, and never had his life attempted, rest assured there is nothing in him; and against Locke's authority in particular, I think it an unanswerable objection (if we needed any), that, although he carried his throat about with him in this world for seventy-two years, no man ever condescended to cut it.' Des Cartes was *all* but murdered; Spinoza, it is true, is said to have died in his bed. 'Perhaps he did; but he was murdered for all that.' He was an invalid, weak and meagre, and was doubtless smothered with pillows by a certain L. M.—a person indicated by Spinoza's biographer only by these initials—who certainly left him dead under the most suspicious circumstances. 'But who was L. M.? It surely never could be Lindley Murray, for I saw him in York in 1825; and, besides, I do not think he would do such a thing—at least not a brother-grammarians: for you know, gentlemen, that Spinoza wrote a very respectable Hebrew grammar.'

'Again,' continues the president, 'Malebranche, it will give you pleasure to hear, was murdered. The man who murdered him is well known: it was Bishop Berkeley. The story is familiar, though hitherto not put in a proper light. Berkeley, when a young man, went to Paris, and called on Père Malebranche. He found him in his cell cooking. Cooks have ever been

a *genus irritabile*; authors still more so: Malebranche was both: a dispute arose; the old father, warm already, became warmer; culinary and metaphysical irritations united to derange his liver: he took to his bed, and died. Such is the common version of the story: "So the whole ear of Denmark is abused." The fact is, that the matter was hushed up, out of consideration for Berkeley, who (as Pope justly observes) had "every virtue under heaven:" else it was well known that Berkeley, feeling himself nettled by the waspishness of the old Frenchman, squared at him; a *turn-up* was the consequence: Malebranche was flogged in the first round; the conceit was wholly taken out of him; and he would perhaps have given in; but Berkeley's blood was now up, and he insisted on the old Frenchman's retracting his doctrine of Occasional Causes. The vanity of the man was too great for this; and he fell a sacrifice to the impetuosity of Irish youth, combined with his own absurd obstinacy.'

The aesthetic essentials for a good murder, it seems, are, first, that the subject of it should be a good man; because, if he were not, he might himself, by possibility, be contemplating murder at the very time; 'and such "diamond-cut-diamond" tussles, though pleasant enough where nothing better is stirring, are really not what a critic can allow himself to call murders. I could mention some people (I name no names) who have been murdered by other people in a dark lane; and so far all seemed correct enough; but, on looking further into the matter, the public have become aware that the murdered party was himself, at the moment, planning to rob his murderer.' Secondly, the subject of the murder should not be a public character: for everybody reads so much about him, and so few people ever see him, that, to the general belief, he is a mere abstract idea. 'The pope would, therefore'—and it is as well, perhaps, to mention it just now—'be a very improper person to murder.' Thirdly, the subject chosen ought to be in good health; 'for it is absolutely barbarous to murder a sick person who is quite unable to bear it.'

A philosophic friend, well known for his philanthropy and general benignity, suggests that the subject chosen ought also to have a family of young children wholly dependent on his exertions, by way of deepening the pathos. And, undoubtedly, this is a judicious caution. Yet I would not insist too keenly on such a condition. Severe good taste unquestionably suggests it; but still, where the man was otherwise unobjectionable in point of morals and health, I would not look with too curious a jealousy to a restriction which might have the effect of narrowing the artist's sphere.'

Mr Thurtell's celebrated effort in this line did not meet with the approbation of the president; 'it was mere plagiarism; and, besides, his style was harsh as Albert Durer, and as coarse as Fuseli. There was, however, an unfinished design of Thurtell's, for the murder of a man with a pair of dumb-bells, which I admired greatly; but it was a mere outline, which he never filled in.'

Of course, as De Quincey himself writes, 'it is impossible to conciliate readers of so saturnine and gloomy a class, that they cannot enter with genial sympathy into any gaiety whatever, but, least of all, when the gaiety trespasses a little into the province of the extravagant. In such a case, not to sympathise is not to understand; and the playfulness, which is not relished, becomes flat and insipid, or absolutely without meaning.' But as to those who merely think the subject too terrible for jesting upon, 'the very excess of the extravagance, by suggesting to the reader continually the aeriality of the entire speculation should disenchant him of all horror.' 'Moreover,' adds the president, 'as to murder, I never committed one in my life. It's a well-known thing amongst all my friends. I can get a paper to certify as much, signed by lots of

* 'And,' adds De Quincey—with that verbosity and absence of the knowledge of where to stop which disfigures so much of his writings, and especially mars his humour—'endeavours to banish them from the county of Middlesex.'

people. Indeed, if you come to that, I doubt whether many people could produce as strong a certificate. Mine would be as big as a breakfast table-cloth. There is indeed one member of the club, who pretends to say he caught me once making too free with his throat on a club-night, after everybody else had retired. But, observe, he shuffles in his story according to his state of civilization. When not far gone, he contents himself with saying that he caught me ogling his throat; and that I was melancholy for some weeks after, and that my voice sounded in a way expressing, to the nice ear of a connoisseur, *the sense of opportunities lost*; but the club all know that he is a disappointed man himself, and that he speaks querulously at times about the fatal neglect of a man's coming abroad without his tools." No; for his part the president disapproves of the practice *in toto*, and upon his word of honour. 'For if once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing; and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. Once begin upon this downward path, you never know where you are to stop. Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps he thought little of at the time. *Principiis obsta*—that's my rule.'

DOOMED TO DEATH.

Nor very long subsequent to the time when the pilfering of a loaf of bread by starving fingers was held deserving of Death by our bloody statute-book, and when Burglary was Death, and Forgery was Death, equally with Murder, and when Murder by consequence was three times more rife than it is now, I was chaplain to a county jail. I was not resident there, nor even bound to be there regularly, as would now be the case, except on the Sunday, but I was called in when any one was lying under the capital sentence—with six days left to him or her in this world at the furthest—almost along with the sheriff and the executioner. I was, as it were, the shadow of the gallows-tree, and predicted its approach as surely, if not, as I humbly hope, so darkly and despairingly. Nevertheless, it is far harder than some persons would have us imagine to make a doomed man take a trustful view of that Dark Gulf which lies so immediately before him.

When a man is ever so ill, Death is not certain; and with all his often large and genuine acceptance of religious consolation, he still keeps a private corner of his heart for earthly hope. Since Providence, as we tell him, and he allows, is so merciful and omnipotent, Providence, says he to himself, can save body as well as soul. When a soldier or a sailor volunteers upon a service, however dangerous, he has a secret expectation of coming out alive from it after all. Far be it from me—who have stood by a hundred death-beds, and know well that Death is met, in the large majority of cases, with exceeding fortitude—to under-rate the courage of my fellow-creatures; but I do affirm that the hope of life—that is, the chance of its not being extinguished—is far more necessary to the doing of great deeds than poor boastful human nature is apt to own. The heroic acts that have been performed at extreme risk by the noblest of our fellow-creatures, are numberless; the heroic acts that have been performed with death for their certain end, are excessively rare; and the greater part of even those will be found to have been anticipations of doom—if Death had not been forced to make his spring, he was lying in wait, and sure of his prey in any case.

Thus the thoughts of almost every man condemned to die by the law are taken up with, and concentrated upon, the hope of a reprieve. Notwithstanding that in many cases the doomed person is ready to admit the justice of his sentence—although I have my

doubts whether there is much genuine candour in that statement, and am of opinion that it is commonly made with some dim piteous notion of exciting commiseration, and eventually pardon—yet, it being in the power of his brother-men to save his life, the taking of it seems to him to be an action absolutely monstrous and incredible. That the prison authorities, the government, the nation, the whole world, should quietly suffer him to be led out under the open sky, and in the face of a great multitude, to be put to death—to be hung by the neck till he is dead—appears to him not only revolting, but (although he knows it has happened to hundreds of others before him) a thing utterly inconceivable. He shuts his eyes to the fate awaiting him, as long as he can, almost always up to the last night he has to live, very often up to the moment when he sets his foot upon the scaffold itself. I believe that, in the majority of cases, the entire energies of the unfortunate wretch are directed to this one impossible attempt of gaining a reprieve. I mistrust for the most part, I am sorry to say, even his willing acceptance of my good offices, of my fervent endeavours to call his attention to more important matters. 'More important?' thinks he. 'What can be more important to a man than the question of whether he is to die on Monday, Tuesday, to-morrow, in an hour perhaps—or whether he is to Live?'

I fear I shall shock many worthy persons, who read this sitting by their firesides with a cravat round their necks instead of a rope, when I say that this state of mind in condemned persons is not outrageous, nor to be greatly reprobated. Felons, as a general rule, are uneducated, irreligious, wicked folks, who have never thought—I do not say of the Great Hereafter, but—of anything whatever beyond the gratification of some mean and present desire. Within the limit of six days, it would be difficult indeed for the best directed efforts to alter, to reverse such natures; but when, in addition, the minds of those with whom we have to deal are preoccupied with one overwhelming terror, made darker by the intervals of frenzied hopes—the *ignes fatui* of a reprieve—our task is arduous indeed. I say nothing of its painful and affecting nature; of the watching of the ill-concealed anxieties, the trembling expectations fated to end in disappointment, the useless flutterings of the tethered bird. If it rested with us jail-chaplains, there would certainly be no more capital punishments. It may be urged, and perhaps with reason, that we are not quite fitted to be judges of such a matter, nor do I wish to argue the question here; only let no man imagine that 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' is the measure that is accorded to the murderer; that we but do unto him as he has done unto his fellow. He did not tell his victim that he should surely die at the end of a certain number of days and at a certain hour, and, keeping him shut up until that hour, then carry out his deadly threat. During that same interval, a doomed man dies sometimes five hundred deaths. There is no such thing as a man being 'game' then, whatever may happen in the last scene of all, when there are a thousand ruffian hands to applaud his assumed fortitude. The jailer, who is always in the condemned cell to guard against the poor wretch laying violent hands upon himself, is not appreciative of any such display; and though 'an atheist's laugh' may be some exchange for 'Deity offended,' no man alone, and without that hideous sympathy, will defy God. I have seen doomed men in almost every disposition of mind—sunk in the stupor of despair, graceless, furious, malignant, and even in rare cases affectedly jocose (by far the most painful sight of any); but in their own cells, and alone with myself and the jailer, I have never known one to be what is called 'game,' nor, as I before said, have I ever known—upon looking back upon all the circumstances, although I may have been deceived at the time—one doomed person not at times buoyed

up by a secret or expressed hope of escaping his fate. There were two cases of this kind in the jail wherein I officiated, which, coming under my notice at precisely the same period, exhibited singular diversities.

Mary B— was condemned to death for the murder, by poison, of her own sister, for whose husband she had conceived a guilty passion. There was no doubt of her having committed the crime, or of her having deserved the punishment. She had, when I first saw her, nearly a week to live, it being about that time to the ensuing Monday. She told me, in our first interview, of how many minutes that space consisted—for she had been allowed a pencil, with which (closely watched lest she should swallow it) she had made the calculation—and '*there are one hundred and twenty gone!*' she whispered with a shudder, when I took my first leave of her. The female jailer told me that, during this poor creature's last two or three days, whenever the great jail-clock struck the hour overhead, she would scream like one in pain; and upon waking in the mornings, would ask with eagerness what time it was, and then bemoan herself that she had slept so late. Those hours—passed in a miserable cell, shut out from any sight of the green earth (for it was mid-July), and almost every sound, except that the hum of the town beneath came up thither to remind her of the world with which she was never more to mix—must surely have been wretched indeed; and yet her cry was, '*Oh, that they might be again!*' Notwithstanding her evident agony at the thoughts of her approaching end, she actually attempted to anticipate it by some twenty-four hours by suicide; or rather, I think, she pretended to attempt it, with some faint notion that such an evidence of her utter misery might procure her pardon; for these miserable persons always imagine, in their frenzied terror, that the governor, the chaplain, nay, the very jailer himself, has power in the matter, and could get them off, or at least respited, if he pleased. How often, when I have been leaving some poor wretch's cell with the comfortable hope that what had been so greedily listened to by the ear, may have taken root in the heart also, have I been suddenly made conscious of the *real motive* that had actuated my unhappy convert, by his plucking my sleeve, and whispering in a tone of heartfelt earnestness which there was no mistaking: '*And you will tell them that I am penitent, chaplain; and that it will do no harm to let me live;*' or by some assurance reiterated for the thousandth time that he is an innocent man. All those who have had any experience in this matter, perceive the folly of the assertion that penal servitude, or any other punishment that can be possibly devised, is, or can be equally dreaded with that of death itself. Men fear it every whit as much as women, who commonly fall after their sentence into a kind of stupor; and the case of Mary B— was by no means worse than that of male convicts I have known. When not in a state of agonised despair, '*The king!*' '*The good king!*' '*The merciful king!*' was perpetually in her mouth; and if he could only know of her condition, she expressed her confidence that he would have saved her. Her cell-door was never opened unexpectedly without her looking up at it with an air of hopeful eagerness. Again, with a curious inconsistency, she would sometimes ask the minutest questions regarding the place of execution; whether it was in the prison-yard, or on the hill behind the jail; and on being told the latter, inquired how many persons it was likely would be there to see '*it*.' She always spoke of her execution as '*it*.' Her last night she spent at the bars of her cell-window, drinking in the quiet of the stars, and taking farewell, as it seemed, of their ineffable beauty. But this phase of her conduct was exceptional; and I believe that from the hour of her conviction to that of her death, the thought of a reprieve was never out of her

waking mind for many consecutive minutes. When she slept, however, poor girl—for she was scarcely a grown woman—she dreamed of the days of her innocence; generally, as she told me, of her childhood; and her last look upon the scaffold was directed behind her, towards the jail, whence, as she knew, a reprieve, if reprieve there was, must necessarily come.

The case of Robert S—, under sentence of death at the same time, exhibited a marked contrast to that of this unfortunate woman. He had been convicted of burglary with violence, and there having been a previous conviction recorded against him, the law, as it then stood, would most certainly take its course. He seemed fully to understand and even acquiesce in this. The law and he, as it seemed to him, had been open enemies all his life, and at last the law had got the better of him. When the judge had told him to dismiss from his mind all hope of earthly pardon, he did dismiss it. I always found him, if not resigned and penitent, at least respectful and uncomplaining. He was grossly ignorant of religion, as of almost everything else, but he was not one of those stupid phlegmatic bores who form most of his class. He shewed a lively and laudable desire to leave something behind him for those who had been mainly dependent for subsistence upon him. The course he took to accomplish this would have been impossible in these days, but it was very common then. I was cognizant of the matter without either assisting or opposing it. The prisoner asked leave of the jailer to send for a surgeon, in order that he might dispose of his body to him before execution; and his request was acceded to. Mr M— of our assize town accordingly had an interview with the convict; he had a reputation more than provincial, and was exceedingly assiduous in the pursuit of his darling profession. He was indeed pretty well known as a buyer of bodies, and I guessed what he had come about when I saw him leave Robert S—'s cell on the eve of the fatal day. He had, it seemed, given the poor fellow a sovereign, but declined to have any dealings with him regarding the proposed purchase. I was rather surprised to hear this, but asked no questions about it at that time. The next day Robert S— was executed in pursuance of his sentence, and buried within the prison walls. He was perfectly quiet and self-possessed to the last, and never appeared to me to have entertained any hope of escaping his fate. And yet the case had been in reality quite otherwise.

Meeting Mr M— a few weeks afterwards at the house of a friend, he informed me of his reasons for not purchasing the body of Robert S—.

'The fact is,' said he, 'I bought that poor fellow's carcass once before. He was hung for burglary two years ago in the next county, and was carried to my house after execution. He frightened Mrs M— a good deal that night by the noise he made with his returning animation. It was annoying of course, but my trade being to cure, and not to kill, I was obliged to do what I could for him, and he was well in a fortnight; and yet that lesson, severe as it was, had, you see, no effect upon him, and he has now been hung in real earnest. He did not know that I was to be the doctor sent for, and was taken terribly aback when he saw me. The rascal had never returned me my ten pounds, you see, and I was not going to pay for the same thing twice over. I should have declined any further dealings with him, besides, since his manner assured me that he had some device in his head of escaping the hangman yet. I have found out what that was now, for, between ourselves, I did get the body after all. He did not trust to chance, which through the mismanagement of the rope saved him on the former occasion, but had provided himself with a silver tube—a thing not of the slightest use, poor fellow, but which many of his class put an implicit trust in—which he managed to keep about him, and to

place unobserved in his throat on the fatal morning. I found it there myself.

Thus even in the case which I had judged to be an exception to the general rule, the one cause of apparent fortitude in the person irrevocably doomed to Death, was the secret hope of escaping it.

THE MONTH:

SCIENCE AND ARTS.

BECAUSE scientific discovery has not astonished the world of late with anything very extraordinary, in the way of electric messages under the Atlantic, or balloon-voyages over it, murmurs are heard from impatient people that our natural philosophers are growing idle, or have used up all their material. That no very astonishing discoveries have been made of late, is only partially true, as our own pages may testify; and we may be sure that while men are earnest to seek out the secrets of nature, there will never be lack of material for them to work upon. There are indeed proofs enough that idleness is not prevailing: the Royal Society have apportioned generous sums out of the grant placed at their disposal by government, among chemists, physiologists, and other savans, who will make good use thereof; and they have contributed liberally out of their own resources to the Humboldt Foundation which is to be established at Berlin. Mr C. V. Walker is pursuing a series of experiments, by authority, with a view to determine the direction of the earth-currents in those magnetic storms or disturbances which, as in last autumn, derange, and in some instances impede the passage of telegraphic signals. By observations at numerous stations, and marking the direction by arrows on a map, as Mr Glaisher does on his wind-maps, data will in time be deducible as to the earth-currents; and a knowledge of these facts will be of essential service to the science of electrotelegraphy.—Lloyd of Dublin, and Robinson of Armagh, both first-rate names in science, have further investigated the abstruse phenomena of electricity and magnetism, as may be seen in the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*.—Wiedemann, a German, finds a remarkable analogy between the phenomena of magnetism and of torsion.—Mr Gassiot, following up his researches on electrical discharges in vacuo, of which we have from time to time made mention, has achieved further results that may be described as surprising. Having been brought before the Royal Society, they were afterwards demonstrated in a lecture by Dr Tyndall at the Royal Institution, where the appliances are on a grand scale. With a large nitric acid battery, and a glass vacuum tube nine inches diameter, slightly charged with vapour of heated potash, the blaze of coloured light on the passage of the electric current, excited the beholders to a burst of admiration. There is something truly wonderful in the effect of breaking the current: the light does not, as usual, instantly disappear, but moves at a measured pace, or, in Dr Tyndall's words, marches stratum by stratum into the negative electrode. Different effects of colour are producible by different vapours: green, for example, by sulphate of copper; and some of the effects are so dazzling, that they cannot be looked at without a darkened glass. As yet, the whole significance of these phenomena has not been ascertained, but that they are related to those of light and heat, scarcely admits of question, or that by their means we shall arrive at satisfactory conclusions concerning the aurora. As illustrations before a college class, or popular audience, they would be eminently attractive.

There is talk of an undersea-telegraph from the Land's End to St Mary's in the Scilly Isles, which lying, as sailors say, well to the west, would be a good 'port of call' for outward-bound vessels. A

line has been laid from Jersey to the French coast near St Malo; one across the Straits from Spain to Ceuta, accelerated perhaps by some years by the quarrel with Morocco; and the six hundred miles of cable are laid from Singapore to Batavia. As in Java the white ants eat the telegraph-posts, the Dutch colonists now substitute living posts—slim trees of graceful foliage—which produce a pleasing effect.

The Humboldt Foundation above mentioned is a project set on foot in Berlin to perpetuate, if possible, the memory of the late Alexander von Humboldt, and the ever-ready and energetic aid which he accorded to scientific claimants of all countries. 'It is therefore our desire,' say the promoters, 'to establish a fund, called the Humboldt Foundation, a memorial of gratitude, designed to promote scientific talent wherever it appears, in all those branches in which Humboldt developed his scientific energy—namely, in works of Natural History and distant Travels.' The Royal Prussian Academy, of which Humboldt was a member for nearly sixty years, is to be intrusted with the administration of the fund. The contributions towards it from scientific men in this country already amount to L.600; and as all countries that cultivate science will contribute, the Foundation bids fair to start with the materials for a high degree of usefulness.

A few geographical, geological, and commercial facts are worth notice. There is talk in the United States of sending out another Arctic expedition, to follow the late Dr Kane's discoveries along the northern coast of Greenland, and, if possible, do that which Parry, accompanied by (now Sir James) Ross, failed to accomplish—get to the pole.—A paper read before the Geographical Society shews the possibility of a railway from Chile across the Andes, and down to the head of the navigation of the Rio de la Plata at Rosario. From Valparaiso to Copiapo and Tres Puntos, a railway is already constructed, chiefly for mining purposes, to an elevation of six thousand feet; and as the Pass proposed for the line is not choked with snow in winter, and the whole distance is not more than eleven hundred miles, the possibility of the scheme is believed in.—A river, heretofore unknown, has been discovered in Vancouver's Island, by the officers of the survey, who report it to be navigable for stern-wheel steamers, and as flowing through land unusually good for that country. This will be good news for emigrants and settlers, especially as there is now a prospect of a fair and friendly settlement of the boundary dispute.—Tuscany has at last set about reclaiming one of the large marshes which render her soil unfertile and unhealthy: it comprises 1300 acres in the province of Pisa, and if the work is a beginning in earnest with the many similarly needful reclamations that have been neglected for ages in the transalpine states, politicians will have good reason to hope for the regeneration of Italy.—Now that our consul is established at Japan, a little mild excitement prevails among botanists in prospect of the harvest of new plants which they hope to gather in that hitherto mysterious country. In this case, it seems probable that scientific explorers will have the start of the missionaries.—The silk-worm epidemic in the south of Europe, besides occasioning researches into the anatomy and physiology of the worms by foreign savans, of which the latest is on the composition of their skin by M. Peligot, has been felt in China, 80,000 ounces of silk-worms' eggs having been sent from Hong-kong to San Francisco, thence by the Isthmian route to the English mail-steamer, so as to arrive in Italy in the shortest possible time. Reckoned at sixteen shillings an ounce, the consignment was of no ordinary value.—The cotton question may now be said to be in its chronic stage, and in mathematical phrase, there is no solution of continuity in the suggestions made as to new regions for growing the article. That the question is of importance, may be

judged from the fact, that we now require a thousand million pounds a year.—The Dutch government are very commendably making plantations of *Isomandra gutta*, the gutta-percha tree, at Surinam; and English botanists have ascertained that varieties of the same tree, yielding a similar juice, grow in India and the islands of the Indian Archipelago.

Within the past three months, the geologists of 'Old Cornwall' have had proofs of activity in their favourite study by two smart earthquake shocks. The second was sufficiently severe to split a mass of masonry from top to bottom at Newquay, three miles north-west of Truro, and to shake bits of plaster from ceilings at St Michael's Mount and elsewhere.—Mr Lieber, the government geologist of South Carolina, in a report on that state, shews proofs of ancient depressions along the coast, of total changes in the course of rivers, of subsequent elevation and extension seaward, succeeded by a depression which is now going on, accompanied by what he describes as 'a southward translocation of our littoral islands.' This insular movement is accounted for by the set of a current, which wastes the northern end of the islands, and deposits the material at the southern end, and at such a rate that a part of the Hunting Isles, where a sportsman still living shot his first buck, is now a hundred yards within the Atlantic. From Australia we hear of the opposite kind of phenomena, as published in the third volume of the *Transactions of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria*, which, in passing, we may mention as highly interesting evidence of the pursuit of science in the colonies. It appears from a series of observations, that in twelve months the bottom of Hobson's Bay rose four inches; that the beach at Williamstown, which, five years ago, was covered by the tide, is now covered with a green vegetation, and is the site of tents and houses. A foot below the present coast-road, a thick bed of sea-shells is found, at an elevation of eight feet above the present level of the bay. Whichever way the coast is followed, similar signs are met with. Flinders' soundings are no longer trustworthy, for where he found ten fathoms water, there are now but seven. The railway between Adelaide city and port rose four inches in the year after it was opened; and considering these changes, the government of South Australia have ordered a new survey of the whole coast of that colony. The conclusion drawn from the several data is, that for some time a rise of four inches per annum has been going on; if, therefore, the banks of the river at Melbourne have risen six feet within the past twenty years, it explains why the wharfs are no longer, as formerly, liable to floods from the Yarra Yarra. Geologists have long been aware that Australia is in an unfinished condition, geologically speaking, as compared with other countries; and it may be that these changes are a part of the treatment which that great country has yet to undergo.

To shew that colonists can think of other than auriferous matters, we extract the table of contents of the volume of *Transactions* above referred to: Reclamation and Cultivation of a Swamp in the rear of Melbourne—Australian Birds, Plants, and Reptiles—On a Water-yielding Tree—and Geology, Astronomy, and Meteorology. Truly we have reason to be proud of our brethren at the antipodes.

The Royal Scottish Society of Arts publish in the last part of their *Transactions* a description of transport by water-power, which, because of its simplicity and economy, deserves to be widely known. At the Tyndrum lead-mines, a square wooden trough 1200 feet long was laid down, with a slope of from 13 to 20 degrees, in expectation that the stream of water made to rush through it would carry the ore down to the stamping-mills. The result was a disappointment, for the lumps would not move over the flat bottom of the trough. A change was made, by fixing the trough

with one of its corners downwards, thus establishing an angular channel, and with satisfactory consequences. The lead ore, broken to the size of ordinary road-metal, was fed by a hopper into the top of the tube; a moderate stream of water was admitted along with it, and the whole ore passed through the tube with an astonishing rapidity, and was delivered at the bottom, no choking taking place at all.' By experiments made for the purpose, a right angle was found to answer better than any other, and to require the smallest quantity of water. The channel is lined with sheet-iron, and is never clogged, even by the heavy lead-powder. At Tyndrum, from 1100 to 1200 tons of ore are delivered annually by means of the tube, and more cheaply than by any other way, the cost in wages of delivering 40 tons being one shilling.

Apart from its usefulness in a mining country, this subject of an angular channel applies to ordinary drains and sewers; and it is argued that this form is less liable to obstruction than the curved or square, for, owing to the slope of the sides, the resistance of solid matters is diminished, and the buoying-up power of the water increased.

The intra-Mercurial planet predicted by M. Le Verrier has not only been discovered sooner than was anticipated, by Dr Lescarbault, but Wolf of Zurich, that indefatigable observer of the solar spots, shews that it has been seen perhaps a dozen times within the past hundred years, by observers in different parts of Europe, who all describe a distinct circular spot, apparently as large as Mercury, passing rapidly across the sun's disk. The year of this, as yet anonymous planet, is shorter than our February by about ten days.

Of the artistic literature published this last season for the gratification of the eye, the *Moral Emblems* of Jacob Cats and Robert Farlie, illustrated by John Leighton, bear away the bell, although, from the nature of its subject, the volume cannot make so much noise as others of less merit. The illustrations—of a certain staid but by no means stiff description—are very beautiful; and indeed, from cover to cover, this truly elegant volume may be said to give the world assurance of a book.

EARLY SPRING.

On, sweetly now the seasons change!
From dark and grim to lightsome eves!
The happy birds have longer range,
And later twitter on the eaves.

The face of nature still is grave,
The dint of biting frost is there;
But shining laurels boldly wave
Their welcome to a milder air.

The earth looks soft, as if, beneath,
The sun's increasing warmth had power;
And soon shall pierce the tender sheath
Which holds the perfect snow-drop flower.

Dear is the earliest dawn of spring—
This hint of future ecstasy—
The thrushes feel it first, and sing
Enraptured on yon naked tree.

I would that I like them could pour
Songs sweet as is my heart's delight!
And when earth's winters all are o'er,
I hope to hail a spring as bright.

JUDITH.

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